

CALLINGTON'S HEALTH POSITION.

MEDICAL OFFICER'S ANNUAL REPORT.

PROGRESS OF HOUSING SCHEME.

Dr. H. Davis, jun., as Medical Officer of Health, presented his annual report for 1919 to the Urban Council at their last week's meeting as follows:—

The district has an area of 2,492 acres, with a population of 1,713, as at the last census, living in 437 houses.

The social conditions have resumed their normal level during the year; men who were on active service and women who were engaged in public work have returned to their civil occupations. The few remaining Belgian refugees left the district in February and the prisoners of war camp was evacuated on October 28th, and dismantled within the following fortnight, with the exception of the sanitary offices, it being considered that these would serve a useful purpose in connection with the market. With this extra accommodation, the existing urinal and w.c. in the fish market could be improved and lighted at night and be used as a public place. It is fairly central and of easy access, and will do quite well until some future date, when some better site may be acquired and you are disposed to build a more elaborate structure.

VITAL STATISTICS.

The number of births registered in the district was 28—16 males and 12 females, a birth rate of 17.7 per 1,000 per annum on an estimated total population of 1,579. The number of deaths was 26—11 males and 15 females, a death rate of 17.1 per 1,000 per annum on an estimated civil population of 1,516. Twenty-eight births and 26 deaths give a natural increase of 2. The ages at death were as follows:—Under one year, 2; 1 at 17; between 25 and 40, 6; between 50 and 70, 8; 70 and upwards, 9, of these four were over 80, the oldest being 89.

The causes of death were—Congenital debility, 2; cancer, 3; bronchitis, 3; pulmonary tuberculosis, 5; other tubercular disease, 1; heart disease, 2; influenza, 1; suicide, 1; other defined diseases, 8.

INFANTILE MORTALITY.

The two deaths that occurred under one year were of twin children from congenital debility at the ages of three and four days respectively, this gives an infant mortality per 1,000 births of 71.

ZYMOTIC DEATH RATE.

The only death that occurred from any notifiable disease was from encephalitis lethargica.

INFECTIOUS DISEASES.

The following cases have been notified—Encephalitis lethargica, 1; erysipelas, 1; pneumonia, 2; scarlatina, 1; malaria, 2; dysentery, 1. With the exception of the first, all terminated in recovery. Four cases of pulmonary tuberculosis and two of other tubercular diseases have also been notified. During March influenza appeared. The cases in the town were few, compared with the great outbreak in the previous autumn, although cases in the surrounding parishes were numerous. This was the only disease in epidemic form. The usual precautions were taken with regard to isolation as far as practicable, disinfectants supplied to patients and occupied rooms subsequently fumigated and disinfected.

SEWERAGE AND DRAINAGE.

The sewers have been frequently inspected, and are in a satisfactory state, and no structural changes have been necessary beyond a mason's gully at Newport. Eight drains have been choked from various causes. Two that were old and of faulty construction required

relaying. In spite of the great drought the sewers and drains gave no trouble. This, I think, speaks well for the manner in which they were laid. One new w.c. has been built.

WATER SUPPLY.

A drought of exceptional duration was experienced during the summer, commencing about the middle of May, and lasted well into October. During this period rain fell only for a week in the later corn harvest, and it rained on "Peace Day" and again on August Bank-holiday. With these exceptions the five months were absolutely rainless, and it was not until November that rain made any appreciable difference to our water supplies. The town gets its supply of water chiefly from the Waterworks Company. Then there is the stream at Pipe Well, and some private pumps. There was never any real danger of a water famine, because the stream at Pipe Well, though low, was fairly maintained, and water could be obtained for the trouble and inconvenience of fetching it. The chief troubles were in connection with the 250 houses supplied by the Waterworks Company, where the sanitary arrangements require a full pressure of water daily to maintain their efficient working order. This soon failed, and the chief sufferers were those at the higher levels, which included the three schools and the prisoners of war camp. The offices were only saved from getting into a bad state by horse and manual labour conveying water from other sources. Naturally there were some complaints made, and tears expressed as to the possibility of an outbreak of infectious disease. Fortunately, just the reverse happened. The five months drought was an exceptionally healthy period: not a single case of infectious disease occurred, and the death rate was the lowest on record for any five consecutive months. I merely state this as a happy coincidence, and not with any foolish attempt to argue that lack of water is beneficial to health.

Our position was getting bad, and it did not require public complaint to impress this fact on the Council. They were fully alive to it, and were making every effort to discover the best way out; obviously, no constructive work of any magnitude could be accomplished to be of service this year, but as a temporary help, a pump was placed at Pipe Well to make the low stream of easier access, and this answered the purpose admirably. The chief business was to look to future years, and to this end joint meetings were held by the Water Company and the Council, the outcome being that the Water Company explained how they could greatly increase both their supply and storage, and promised to do this without delay. This entirely satisfied the Council, and they considered their object achieved. Up to the present, however, nothing has been done, and whether or not the Water Company have the ability to fulfil their promise remains to be seen. At any rate, I think the time has come to ask for information on this question.

TRADE PREMISES.

About 40 places are kept under observation. The sanitary conditions are satisfactory, and the question of means of escape in case of fire does not occur. The defects found have been want of cleanliness and lime washing.

HOUSING OF THE WORKING CLASSES.

There has been no addition to the number of houses for over five years. Some houses that might be closed as unfit for habitation are still allowed to remain occupied, and with the scarcity of houses there appears to be no immediate alternative. The housing scheme is in progress. One site of an acre and three-quarters in Liskeard-road has been purchased, and negotiations are taking place for acquiring an adjacent site. The Housing Committee are now employing an architect to prepare plans for arrangement of

site, and the building of 30 houses. These houses will be an important asset to the housing accommodation of the town; but the housing question is a problem of no easy solution, and it is hoped that these houses will at least indirectly benefit the poorer classes, who now occupy the worst houses and cannot pay a rental of more than £7 or £8 a year.

TABULAR STATEMENT.

Dwelling-houses inspected	120
Action taken with regard to houses unfit for habitation	2
Choked drains	8
Offensive accumulations	10
Overcrowding	4
General repairs	Many

SCAVENGING AND HOUSE REFUSE.

The method of clearing ash bins once a week, and other rubbish once a month, works well, and is thoroughly observed by the public. The Authority is responsible for the removal of the refuse, and the work is done by contract in a fairly satisfactory manner. There have been times, however, when some laxity has occurred, and the Council have taken steps to prevent its recurrence. Street sweeping is done by a man who takes an obvious interest in his work, and it may be safely said that the streets were never better cleaned than they are to-day. A new handcart is soon to replace the wheelbarrow now in use.

There exists a most objectionable habit of throwing banana skins, orange peel, etc., and, apart from the danger of falling on such, it gives the town an untidy appearance. For this reason there will soon be some wicker baskets placed about the town as receptacles.

A healthy town should have a clean and attractive appearance, and it is a pleasure to see that so many houses have had their fronts cleaned and painted during the year, a thing that has been sadly neglected during the war from enforced circumstances. I would even suggest that the owners of front gardens should make a better attempt to keep them gay with judiciously selected flowers, a window box, or some trailing plants. These are small matters, perhaps, but they count; they add colour and tone to our sombre surroundings, they please the senses and brighten the mind, and the influence of a healthy mind over the body is unquestionable. At any rate, they are evidence of vitality and, more than this, they impress visitors, some of whom might be inclined to become residents, and it is futile to say that appearances do not go a long way with the vast majority of people.

BY-LAWS.

Those in force in the district are with regard to nuisances, new buildings, slaughter-houses, and dairies and cowsheds. The Infectious Disease (Notification Act, 1889) and Part III Public Health (Amendment) Act, 1890, have been adopted.

The Sanitary Committee have met many times during the year, and I wish to thank the members for their excellent attendance and assistance.

